



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**PRESS RELEASE  
*VIEHL PLEADS GUILTY  
TO DAMAGING, INTERFERING  
WITH ANIMAL ENTERPRISE IN CONNECTION  
WITH MCMULLIN MINK FARM INCIDENT***

SALT LAKE CITY – William James Viehl, age 23, of Layton, charged in a two-count indictment returned in March with damaging and interfering with the operation of an animal enterprise in connection with an early morning Aug. 19, 2008, attack at the McMullin mink farm in South Jordan and an attempted attack Oct. 18, 2008, at the Mathews mink farm in Hyrum, has pleaded guilty to the McMullin attack.

Viehl, who entered the guilty plea Wednesday afternoon in federal court, admitted that he used a facility of interstate commerce – cell phones – for the purpose of damaging and interfering with the operation of the McMullin mink farm. According to the plea agreement, the damage and loss to real and personal property at the farm exceeded \$10,000.

Federal prosecutors will ask the judge to dismiss the second count of the indictment, a misdemeanor charging Viehl with the attempted attack at the Mathews farm in Hyrum, at sentencing. Sentencing is set for Nov. 12,

2009, at 2 p.m. in U.S. District Judge Dee Benson's courtroom. Viehl, who is in custody, faces up to five years in prison for the felony conviction.

The case against a second defendant in the case, Alex Jason Hall, age 21, of Ogden, continues. A trial date for Hall, who also is in custody, is expected to be scheduled soon, federal prosecutors say.

Contributing to the ongoing investigation of the cases are the FBI and its Joint Terrorism Task Force, the South Jordan, Kaysville and Farmington police departments, and the Cache County Sheriff's Office.

"While we recognize and respect the strongly held beliefs of those who advocate for animal rights, when their actions cross over the line into criminal conduct, we are going to take aggressive action," U.S. Attorney Brett L. Tolman said today. "Regardless of your opinion, the fur industry is lawful and provides income for many Utah families. The law protects them; plain and simple. We all rely on the rule of law to protect us, our opinions, and our lawful ventures. Criminal acts targeting businesses in the dark of night are not going to be tolerated in our communities," Tolman said.

"At the outset of this investigation, the FBI and the JTTF, working with its local law enforcement partners including the South Jordan Police Department, committed to finding the individuals responsible for the damages caused to the McMullin Mink Farm. And once the FBI was made aware of the attempt to damage the Matthews Mink Farm, that same pledge was made," Timothy J. Fuhrman, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Salt Lake Field Office said today.

"The FBI supports individuals' rights to exercise First Amendment privileges; however, once that activity crosses the line into criminal conduct, there will be a thorough and aggressive investigation of such incidents," Fuhrman said.

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